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# Abraham Lincoln and Music

## Musical Tributes

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Wheeling News-Register 2-12-52

# 'Lincoln Portrait'

## Symphony Highlight

In the timely playing of Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," the Wheeling Symphony orchestra with Henry Mazer conducting, will present for the first time in Wheeling this composition which is Copland at his best.

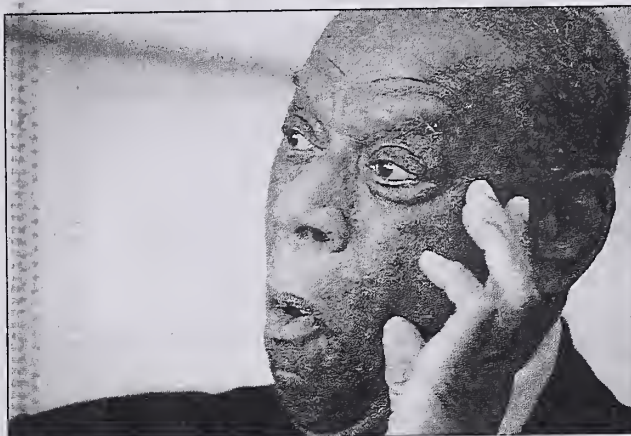
Considered to be the outstanding living American composer, Copland wrote "Lincoln Portrait" at the suggestion of Andre Kostelanetz, conductor, shortly after American entered the last war. Copland used the lesser known speeches and letters of Lincoln to supply the text, in only one instance drawing on the better known passages. The famous "Camptown Races," and a Civil War period ballad known today as "Springfield Mountain" provided part of the score, with most of the orchestration consisting of Copland's own musical work. The combination of superb music with the words of a great president conveys the magnificent spirit of our country.

Excerpts from the text for "Lincoln Portrait" to be played by the Wheeling Symphony orchestra will have Earl Powell as narrator at the Wednesday, February 13 and Thursday, February 14, concerts as vital today as the day they were uttered, include: "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. . . . We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trail through which we pass will light us down in honor or dis-

honor, to the latest generation. We even, we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility. . . . The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country. . . . It is the eternal struggle between two principles, right or wrong, throughout the world. . . . It is the same spirit that says 'You toil and work and earn bread—and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race. . . . As I would not be a slave, so I



## Faces in the crowd



Tribune photo by Charles Osgood

William Warfield, who appeared in the 1951 film of "Showboat," now teaches voice at Northwestern University.

## Voice that moved 'Ol Man River' still keeps rollin' along

By Richard Rothschild  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

**W**illiam Warfield's vocal career includes a repertoire that spans seven centuries. He has performed Brahms' "German Requiem" with conductor Bruno Walter and Copland's "Lincoln Portrait" with Leonard Bernstein.

For many years his concerts of Handel's "The Messiah" at Monumental Baptist Church on Oakwood Boulevard were an Easter season staple in Chicago. In 1975, following his 25th anniversary concert at New York's Town Hall, The New York Times wrote: "Mr. Warfield's performance must stand among the very finest to be heard today."

He recently received the Dushkin Award from The Music Center of the North Shore for "his commitment to music performance and education" over half a century.

But for all his accomplishments and honors as a singer and teacher, the 75-year-old bass-baritone has long been linked with the role of Joe in the Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein musical "Showboat," specifically his powerful rendition of the show's signature tune, "Ol' Man River." (The show's latest revival is onstage at the Auditorium Theatre.)

From his performance in the 1951 movie version of "Showboat" to his many recitals through the years, Warfield's link with "Ol' Man River" may be stronger than any other singer, with the possible exception of Paul Robeson, who created the role of Joe in the 1936 film version.

During a break between classes at Northwestern's School of Music, where he has taught voice classes since 1990, Warfield discussed the pull of "Ol' Man River," a song he is asked to perform at nearly all his concerts.

"First of all," Warfield says, "the song is very well-written, the way it builds throughout, going up to that final 'ol' man river, he just keeps rolling along."

"Secondly, it is a philosophical commentary on injustices, even in 1927 when it first came out. It links the everlasting flow of the river with the everlasting flow of man's aspirations."

A native of Arkansas, Warfield grew up in Rochester, N.Y., where he began his musical career as a boy soprano in his father's church choir. He later won a scholarship to his hometown Eastman School of Music.

His skill with languages (he is fluent in French, German and Italian) earned Warfield a post in military intelligence.

After World War II, Warfield made his New York recital debut in 1950, and performed his first Chicago recital in 1952.

Warfield says the central lesson he tries to teach his students is that vocal technique merely provides the foundation for a singer.

"I'm trying to get [my students] interested in all forms of art, especially music. They can learn from chamber music, symphonies, rock, reggae and even rap," Warfield says. "You are the sum total of all that you know and all the experiences that you have. The more symphonies you go to, the more concerts you go to, the more it broadens your intellectual base."

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## Yaroslavsky is set to narrate Copland's 'Lincoln Portrait'

By Lisa M. Soddors, Staff Writer  
LA Daily News

NORTHRIDGE - As a public official since 1975 - first on the Los Angeles City Council, then as a Los Angeles County supervisor - Zev Yaroslavsky has long found inspiration in the words of President Abraham Lincoln.

That's why he was thrilled to be asked to narrate a performance of "Lincoln Portrait" by renowned American composer Aaron Copland. The work will be performed Friday by the 46-member wind ensemble at California State University, Northridge.

"I can't even imagine the kinds of burdens Abraham Lincoln bore," Yaroslavsky said during a break from a recent rehearsal. "I think he was the greatest president in our nation's history."

"Lincoln Portrait" is a 13-minute concert piece of music interspersed with excerpts from Lincoln's speeches, including the famed Gettysburg Address, and details from the life of the 16th president.

The work was commissioned in 1942 by conductor Andre Kostelanetz at a time when many conductors wanted works that could reassure the country as it entered World War II, said Lawrence Stoffel, conductor and CSUN director of bands.

"This is a work that many people say represents Aaron Copland's 'Americana' period at his best," Stoffel said.

The composition reflects "the ideals of democracy and freedom in the purest sense," he said. "He used Abraham Lincoln's speeches. It's not a chest-thumping patriotism, but a genuine sense of freedom."

Lines like "we cannot escape history" speak to Yaroslavsky, reminding him that actions - and inaction - have consequences, he said.

"These words were not just powerful 150 years ago; they speak to us today," he said. "It's really a call to face up to your responsibilities."

To prepare, Yaroslavsky has been listening to several recordings of the work - performances by Adlai Stevenson and Henry Fonda are his favorites - and rehearsing with the wind ensemble. He said he's trying to tone down his booming baritone - which works well for political speeches - to let Lincoln's words speak for themselves.

Because he played piano and oboe as a boy - "neither one very well" - Yaroslavsky can read music well enough to keep up with the ensemble, but he noted that the biggest challenge for him is "paying close attention" to the conductor.

"Last week, I skipped one of the narrations, and this poor clarinetist was holding onto a note for five minutes," Yaroslavsky said. "I thought she was going to bust a gut!"

During one recent rehearsal, Stoffel took the time to remind the ensemble of the horrors of slavery that Lincoln sought to end: families torn apart, and slave owners who could legally beat, rape and mutilate other human beings because they "owned" them.

"This man spoke against that," said Stoffel, turning to percussionist Steve Hernandez, 20, of San Fernando, "and all of that must come out in your tympany roll."

"Don't feel any pressure," Yaroslavsky quipped dryly.

"Lincoln Portrait" will be part of a program titled "Everybody's All-American," which also will feature Richard Rodgers' "Carousel Waltz" from the musical "Carousel"; Vincent Persichetti's Symphony for Band, Opus 69; William Schuman's "George Washington Bridge"; and William Grant Still's "Folk Suite."

Several of the CSUN musicians stopped by to shake the supervisor's hand after rehearsals and said they hoped having him perform with them would draw more people to the concert.

"I think it lends a certain integrity and dramatic value to the performance," said trumpet player Richard Hofmann, 43, of Granada Hills. "We have a prominent local politician reading the words of a prominent national president."

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IF YOU GO: Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and the Cal State Northridge Wind Ensemble will perform Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," at 8 p.m. Friday at the campus' Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$10 general admission, \$7 seniors and \$5 students, and are available at the door. On-campus parking is \$4.



